

Encourage your children to always talk with you when someone has abused them.

Be alert for physical and behavioral changes that might signal child sexual abuse. Some physical signs are bruises and scars, bedwetting, loss of appetite, nightmares, venereal disease, and pain or irritation around the genital area. Behavioral symptoms may include refusing to go to school or to be alone, increased anxiety or immature behavior, artwork that depicts strange sexual or physical overtones, and a change in attitude toward a relative, neighbor, or babysitter.

If your child has been abused, report to the police and child protection agency. You may save other children from being harmed. Seek counseling for your child from a community mental health, child welfare or child abuse treatment center.

Tips on Choosing Day Care Centers/Babysitters

1. Find out as much as you can about the caretaker's reputation and whether there have been any complaints in the past. Is the caretaker licensed or regulated in any way? What are their qualifications? Have background checks been made? Have you asked for and checked references?
2. Drop in unannounced, periodically, to ensure that the quality of care meets your standards. Observe how the children relate to the caretaker(s).
3. Ask about the philosophy and practice of discipline. And then ask your child the same questions.
4. Make sure there is ongoing parent involvement.

Compare notes with other parents. And, most important, talk with your child daily about how things are going and investigate problems that worry you or become chronic.

Helpful Community Resources

Schools, recreation departments, churches or community organizations, like the Boys and Girls Clubs or YMCA, sponsor after school programs for elementary school children and "drop-in" centers for teens. Check with your local organizations to see what they offer.

What You Can Do To Help

Volunteer to start a block watch in your neighborhood. If your child's school doesn't include crime and drug abuse prevention in its curriculum, work with parents' associations, teacher's groups, and law enforcement officials to change the situation.

Invite the local crime prevention unit to talk about children's safety to a neighborhood meeting of parents and children.

Serve as an advocate for sensitive treatment of child victims, for adequate regulation of child care, and for programs that work to keep kids safe and help kids keep themselves safe.

The National Crime Prevention
Council
www.ncpc.org
— and —
Mesa Police Department
www.mesaaz.gov/police



KEEPING KIDS SAFE...

...KIDS KEEPING SAFE



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Would Your Child Know What To Do If...

He got lost at a shopping mall?

A nice, friendly stranger offered her a ride home after school?

A babysitter wanted to play a secret game that no one would know about?

A friend dared him to hitchhike?



At School or At Play

Walk the neighborhood with your child. Pick out the safest route to school and friends' houses. Avoid danger spots like alleys and wooded areas. Identify safe places to go in an emergency, like a neighbor's house, a block parent, or an open store.

Encourage your child to walk and play with friends, not alone, and to stay in well-lighted, open areas where others can see them. Teach your child to walk confidently and stay alert to what's going on.

Don't hang a house key around your child's neck. It's a telltale sign that you won't be home when they return from school. Put it inside a pocket or sock.

Encourage your child to look out for other kids' safety and to stay away from strangers who hang around playgrounds, public restrooms and empty buildings. A stranger is someone the child doesn't know well. Teach your child to remember and report to you the license numbers of people who offer rides, hang around playgrounds, or appear to follow them. If a stranger tries to follow or grab your child, teach them to scream "Stay away from me," and run to the nearest place where people are around.

At Home Alone

Make sure your child can reach you by telephone, wherever you are. Have your child check in with you at work or with a neighbor when they get home.

Caution your child about answering the phone and accidentally letting a stranger know they are alone. The child should say that parents are busy and take a message.

Post important phone numbers near all your home phones:

Police: _____

Fire Department: _____

Emergency: _____

Poison Control Center: _____

Mom or Dad at work: _____

Neighbor: _____

Grandparents: _____

Agree on rules for having friends over or going to someone else's house when no adult is present.

Work out an escape plan in case of fire.

Tell your child never to open the door to a stranger when home alone. (Consider the height of your child when installing a peep hole in your front door.) Teach your child how to work door and window locks and make sure to use them.

Discuss fun ways to be home alone. For example — feed pets, read books, or write a letter to a friend or relative.

Child Abuse

At least 100,000 children are reported as victims of sexual abuse each year, and experts say the actual number is much higher. It is especially difficult to detect abuse because the abuser is often a parent, relative, a babysitter, or close family friend. Children may not recognize it when it happens or know it is wrong.



Start With The Basics

1. Rehearse with your child his/her full name, address and phone number, including area code, and how to make emergency phone calls from home and public phones. Practice on an unplugged phone.
2. Teach your child to go to a store clerk or security guard and ask for help if you become separated in a store or shopping mall. Tell them never to go into the parking lot alone. And, when possible, accompany your child to the restroom.
3. Tell your child never to accept gifts or rides from someone they don't know well. Your child should never go anywhere with another adult, even one who says you have sent him or her. Adopt a family code word to be used if you have to ask a third party to pick up your child. And, make sure your child knows to never, ever, hitchhike!
4. Teach your children that no one, not even someone they know, has the right to touch them in a way that makes them feel